STANDARD FORM NO. 64

CONFIDENTIAL - SECURITY INFORMATION

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : ARA - Mr. Cabot

DATE: April 2, 1953

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FROM : MIL - Mr. Fisher

SUBJECT: Communist Influence in Guatemala.

Background

Following upon the Guatemalan revolution in 1944, which saw the displacement of the military dictator General Ubico, a regime took over with a program of radical political reform. During the Administration of President Juan Jose Arevalo (1945-51) there was an indiscriminate tolerance of elements which included a number of Communists, Guatemalan and foreign, who steadily infiltrated to positions of influence in the pro-Government parties, the Congress, organized labor, intellectual groups, the official press and radio, the Social Security Institute, and the Agrarian Reform Administration. This has continued up to the present, tolerated and frequently connived in by the chief executive. Though the Communists are relatively few, their influence is far out of proportion to their numbers. Their basic tactic is militant support of the Arevalo-Arbenz reform program, whose aims coalesce with many of their own limited objectives.

Penetration of the Political Parties

Until June 21, 1951, it was the habit of the regime to deny that there were any Communists in Guatemala, and they worked through the principal pro-Government parties, PAR, RN and FPL. The Communist Party was formally launched at a large public meeting held on June 21, 1951 to celebrate the first anniversary of the publication of the newspaper Octubre, which carried the emblem of the hammer and sickle and the slogan "For the establishment of a Great Communist Party". A number of Government officials (including the Secretary of the Presidency Salguero) and party leaders of other political parties supporting the Government attended the meeting, which was held in a theater made available gratis by the Government. It was announced that Jose Manuel Fortuny was Secretary General of the party. Fortuny was a former PAR leader and deputy in Congress and a former member of the National Electoral Board.

Listed among the members of the Central Committee of the party was Alfredo Guerra Borges, former editor of the official newspaper Diario de Centro America, from which position he resigned the year before to

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join the staff of Octubre. Victor Manuel Gutierrez, head of the labor organization Confederación General de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CGTG), and Carlos Manuel Pellecer, Secretary of Disputes of the CGTG, were named to the Central Committee of the Communist Party after Gutierrez returned from a trip to Moscow at the end of 1951 and dissolved his small Partido Revolucionaria Obrero de Guatemala (PROG).

In December 1952, the Communist Party of Guatemala changed its name to Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo (PGT), but remained unchanged in its aims and leadership. The purpose of the change was obviously to facilitate legal registration as a political party, which was accomplished a few days later despite Article 32 of the Constitution which prohibits political organizations of "foreign or international character". The PGT formed part of the pro-Government "Democratic Electoral Front" with PAR, RN, and MG, which engaged in the Congressional elections in January 1953. Among the candidates which it supported were Fortuny and Pellecer.

Although with the emergence of the PGT there is now an open Communist Party, the pro-Government parties harbor an unknown number of crypto-Communists and fellow travelers. Their influence is seen in such actions as the following:

The four PGT members of Congress were joined by fifteen others in June 1952 in signing a "Declaration of Solidarity with the Korean People". In the Congressional Session which opened March 1, 1953, Victor Manuel Gutierrez was re-elected to the key post of Chairman of the Agrarian Reform Committee, and Jose Alberto Cardoza, PGT, was re-elected to the key post of Chairman of the Committee on Revision of the Labor Code. The Congressional appointee on the three-member National Electoral Board is Alfonso Orantes, a fellow traveler or crypto-Communist who attended the second plenary session of the Communist Party in Guatemala in December 1952.

The Secretary General of PAR, the strongest and most radical of the pro-Government parties, is Alvaro Hugo Salguero. Salguero is a former Secretary of the Presidency with a record of pro-Communist activities. The Secretary General of RN is Jaime Diaz Rozzotto, who is now Secretary of the Presidency and an avowed partisan of Communist causes. He attended and addressed the second plenary congress of the Communist Party in Guatemala in December 1952. The co-Secretary General of MG is Roberto Alvarado Fuentes who attended the Vienna Peace Conference two years ago while

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holding the office of President of Congress. The other co-Secretary General is Augusto Charnaud MacDonald, the Minister of Finance. Charnaud MacDonald is a former PAR leader who opposed the Communists and withdrew to organize the Socialist Party, later absorbed by the PRG.

Labor

Victor Manuel Gutierrez has been at the forefront of the labor movement since its beginning in 1944. As Secretary General of the Confederacion de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CTG), he shared top rank in labor for several years with Manuel Pinto Usaga, head of the rival Federation Sindical de Guatemala, (FSG). In May 1951 an International Transport Workers Conference was held in Guatemala City attended by Luis Saillant, head of the Soviet-sponsored WFTU, and Lombardo Toledano. At that meeting it was announced that the CGT and FSG would unite to form the Confederacion General de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CGTG). The CGTG was organized at a meeting in Guatemala City in October 1951. Victor Manuel Gutierrez was elected Secretary General, and eleven of the twenty-eight members of the Executive Committee were considered by the Embassy to be Communists. Pinto Usaga, who had made pro-Communist statements for years, dropped out of active participation in labor matters and is now Guatemalan Consul General in Mexico.

The CGTG Secretary of Disputes is Carlos Manuel Pellecer, a member of the Central Committee of the PGT, who was elected to Congress in January 1953. He has a long record of Communist activity and led the attack against the United Fruit Company in the bitter labor dispute finally settled in May 1952. The CGTG is associated with the CTAL and WFTU. Gutierrez and two other CGTG delegates are now attending the CTAL Conference in Santiago, Chile.

The Confederacion Nacional Campesina de Guatemala declined to join the CGTG when it was formed. However, in June 1952, the Communists were allowed prominent participation in the CNCG's National Rural Conference in Guatemala City, and Jose Luis Ramos, a Communist Vice Secretary of Agricultural Relations of the CGTG, was elected Secretary of Training of the CNCG. In July 1952 CNCG Secretary General Leonardo Castillo Flores announced his intention to promote "an effective alliance between the working class and the peasants".

In 1950 the teachers' union, Sindicato de Trabajadores en Educacion de Guatemala (STEG) forced the Education Division of the IAA to get out of Guatemala.

Communist

Communist intellectuals are found in the CGTG-affiliated Sindicato de Trabajadores Intellectuales y Artisticos Revolucionarios (STIAR), and the leftist journalists' union Sindicato Nacional de Periodistas de Guatemala (SNPG). Though not a labor union, the leftist youth intellectual group SAMER-TI has interlocking ties with Communist elements in the CGTG.

Official Press and Radio

Carlos Gonzalez Orellano, chief of the President's Secretariat for Publicity and Propaganda, has supported Communist causes on occasion. His subordinates include Raul Leiva, a section chief, whose poems and other writings in the official paper display pro-Communist conviction. Another staff member, Otto Raul Gonzalez, is a "Pro-Peace" Committee official who attended the Peking "Peace" Conference. Another reported employee is Lorenzo Montufar Navas, until recently employed in the Guatemalan Legation in London, whose writings seldom stray far from the pro-Communist line.

The director of the official newspaper Diario de Centro America is Leopoldo Castillo Saenz; the editor in chief is Arturo Guevara Paniagua. Neither is an identifiable Communist, but the columns of the Diario de Centro America continue to print news and comment slanted to show a pro-Soviet, anti-U.S. bias. Recent examples of this follow:

1) The paper on July 12, 1952 published on its foreign news page what purported to be a statement by a Lt. John Quinn of the USAF, confessing participation in germ bomb attacks against North Korea. Although an inconspicuous note at the end identified the article as a publication of the "National Peace Committee", it was set up to appear as a factual news story and its double column headline reading (in translation) "Lieut. John Quinn Reveals his Participation in Bacteriological Warfare" was designed to attract maximum reader attention.

2) The paper gave many columns of coverage to a Communist-front meeting called the "National Conference in Defense of the Rights of Youth", held in Guatemala City February 20-22. The paper, among other things, printed statements endorsing the event by Victor Manuel Gutierrez and Edelberto Torres, a Nicaraguan Communist employed in the Ministry of Education.

Nuestro Diario was jointly purchased by PAR, FPL, and RN after the unsuccessful revolt of July 18-19, 1949, reportedly with money supplied

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by Arevalo from his confidential official funds. The paper recently reiterated its claim to be a private, unsubsidized enterprise, but its lack of visible means of support lends credence to the common view that it receives regular infusions of cash from the Government. Its director is Paulino Ovalle, a PAR deputy who embraced Alvarado Fuentes at the airport when he departed for the Vienna "peace" conference and printed a lengthy piece in his paper praising the trip. Typical examples of the material filling the columns of Nuestro Diario follow:

1) On June 26, 1952, Nuestro Diario reported that the four PGT members of Congress would contribute their recent pay increases to the PGT and the CGTG. The paper then commented that this was "a truly patriotic gesture, since these bodies will have more funds for attending to the problems of the workers".

2) On June 24, 1952, Nuestro Diario published the text of a letter addressed to the American Ambassador in Guatemala by seventeen Communists and pro-Communists calling for termination of the "unjust and inhuman" war in Korea, where the "invading armies" were massacring defenseless Korean prisoners, and were using bacteriological warfare against the population.

The director of the official government radio, TGW, TGWA, TGWB, is Carlos Alvarado Jerez, a pro-Communist. He is an active officer in the Guatemala chapter of the Partisans of Peace, and attended the "peace" conference in Vienna last fall. Raul Leiva, mentioned above, replaced him as director during his absence. Like the Diario de Centro America and Nuestro Diario, the official radioreports extensively on the activities of the various Communist front organizations, presenting them in a neutral or faborable light. An example of the station's output follows:

On March 12, 1953, TGWA broadcast a denunciation of the mutual aid pact signed by the U.S. and the Dominican Republic, declaring that ex-President Trujillo of the [redacted] country had thereby signed away its independence. On the same [redacted] station reported on the plans of Carlos Alvarado Jerez and Oscar [redacted]ado Palma, who are members of the Comite Pro-Paz, to hold a "peace" conference in Guatemala with the participation of the CGTG and the CNCG.

Social Security

Communists infiltrated the Social Security Institute (IGSS) from its beginning in 1947, but the process suddenly accelerated early in 1951

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when Alfonso Solorzano became its head. His election as Administrator by the IGSS Board of Directors was followed by the resignations of several subordinate employees and their replacement by Communists and fellow travelers. He appointed as his office manager the Salvadoran Abel Cuenca, who participated in the 1932 Communist uprising in his homeland, but has since left the IGSS. Solorzano installed Sra. Laura Mallol de Bermudez, a Chilean who is widely reputed to be a Communist, as Technical Adviser to the Social Service School, causing a wide schism among the students and loss of its trained technical guidance. Solorzano himself helped Lombardo Toledano organize the CTAL in Mexico and assisted in founding the CTG in Guatemala. He has frequently attended Communist functions in Guatemala, but has not admitted he is a Communist.

Agrarian Reform

Victor M. Gutierrez, FGT, Chairman of the Agrarian Reform Committee, guided the Agrarian Reform Law through Congress, which adopted it on June 17, 1952. The law provides for a pyramid of agrarian committees to rule on petitions for expropriation and distribution of land. Three of the five seats on each of the local agrarian committees are allotted to representatives of the CGTG and CNCG. On the Departmental committees, two of the five seats are allotted to the same organizations, which have three of the nine seats on the National Agrarian Council, the highest authority on agrarian matters under the president. In practice, the CGTG and CNCG votes are strengthened by the absence of the representatives of the General Association of Agriculturalists (AGA), which refused to nominate any, and by the appointment of members friendly to the CGTG and CNCG by other entities, mostly governmental, represented on the committees.

In addition to the committees, the law authorized creation of a new executive agency to administer agrarian matters, called the Departamento Agrario Nacional (DAN). This department is under a close associate of Arbenz, Major Alfonso Martinez, described as an opportunist and not a Communist. Nevertheless, Communists and fellow travelers have taken key positions in the Department. They include Waldemar Barrios Klee, head of the legal department, a leader in Communist front youth groups; Ernesto Capuano, FRG, unsuccessful running mate with Fortuny in the January 1953 Congressional elections; Jose Luis Ramos, a member of the Central Committee of the PGT.

Communist leaders have made agrarian reform a principal weapon for their political purposes of (1) breaking the conservative opposition

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represented by the land-owning class and (2) gaining control of the unorganized peasant class; and they are using the Guatemalan law as a "model" to stir unrest among the agricultural populations of neighboring El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, and for propaganda as far away as Bolivia and Chile.

Attachment:

Embassy's list of Persons Employed by Guatemalan Government who have been identified with Communism or Communist causes.

Not attached
To file copy

ARA:MB:J.Fisher:mcm